

CLAIMS

1. A method of managing information for a plurality of computers in a distributed network comprising the steps of:

(A) collecting original data related to each computer and storing the original data in a respective database;

5 (B) generating an index table including index data for each computer wherein the index data is configured (i) to identify at least a portion of the contents of the original data stored in the database, and (ii) to facilitate access to the databases over the distributed network;

10 (C) scanning at least one of the index tables to select databases that match a user query;

(D) accessing the selected databases to retrieve original data and generate an output therefrom.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of generating an index table includes the substeps of:

producing records in the table characterized by a record type selected from the group comprising a database name, a system name, a disk name, a network
5 interface name and a user name; and

producing connection information for each database to facilitate access thereto over the distributed network.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said accessing step includes the substep of:

using respective connection information to connect to and access the corresponding database.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
producing a summarized data table for the computers.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein said plurality of computers are organized in a tree-style hierarchy, the step of producing the summarized data table includes the substep of:

- condensing original data from databases that are lower in the hierarchy
5 to produce the summarized data and passing the summarized data upstream to databases for storage therein.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said steps of scanning and accessing define a first mode of operation, said method further comprising the step of accessing a summarized data table at a base level in the hierarchy having the summarized data thereby avoiding access to one or more databases lower in the hierarchy.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the summarized data table comprises at least one of application resource information or application usage information.

8. An apparatus for managing information for computers in a distributed network comprising:

- a collection agent associated with each of a plurality of computers configured to acquire and store original data in a respective storage databases;
5 at least one condensing agent for condensing said original data into index data, said index data configured (i) to identify at least a portion of the contents of said original data, and (ii) to facilitate access to said storage databases over the distributed network;
a base database including said index data;
10 a console module configured to select storage databases for access thereto responsive to a user query for said contents, said console being further operative to use said index data to access said selected storage databases, retrieve original data, and generate an output.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said plurality of computers are arranged in a logical tree style hierarchy wherein said console module is configured to execute on a head end of said hierarchy, a remainder of said computers populating a subtree of said hierarchy at a plurality of levels.

10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein said original data in said storage databases comprises information relating to at least one of systems, disks, networks, application programs, and users associated with a respective one of said plurality of computers.

11. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein said base database includes an index table having a plurality of records containing said index data, each record being characterized by a record type selected from the group comprising a storage database name, a system name, a disk name, a network interface name and a user name.

12. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein each record of said index table further includes a first plurality of fields each corresponding to a level in said subtree, said first plurality of fields collectively describing one of said storage databases and a corresponding level in said subtree.

13. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein each record of said index table further includes at least one further field comprising connection information for facilitating access to said storage database identified in said first plurality of fields.

14. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein records in said index table having said record type corresponding to said storage database names identify said storage databases contained in said subtree.

15. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein said records in said index table having said record type corresponding to said system names identify systems whose original data associated therewith is included in at least one of said storage databases in said subtree.

16. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein said records in said index table having said record type corresponding to said disk names identify disks whose original data associated therewith is included in at least one of said storage databases in said subtree.

17. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein said records in said index table having said record type corresponding to said network interface names identify network interfaces whose original data associated therewith is included in at least one of said storage databases in said subtree.

18. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein said records in said index table having said record type corresponding to said user names identify users who have executed an application program and whose original data associated therewith is included in at least one of said storage databases in said subtree.

19. An apparatus for managing information for computers in a distributed network comprising:

a first database configured to store original data related to a first computer;

a condensing agent coupled to said first database and configured to generate summarized data based on said original data;

a base database having a first portion configured to store said summarized data and a second portion configured to store index data comprising at connection information of said first database; and

a console module coupled to said base database and configured for operation in (i) a first mode to generate a first output based on said summarized data and (ii) a second mode wherein said console module uses said connection information in said index data to facilitate access to said first database to generate a second output.

20. The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising a data collection agent for acquiring and storing said original data in said first database.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said first database is local to said first computer.

22. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said first database is remote from said first computer, said first database comprising a portion of a client-server database.

23. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said data collection agent is configured to acquire said original data relating to at least one of a system, a disk, a network interface, an application program and a user associated with said first computer.

24. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said first portion of said base database comprises an application table having information relating to usage of application programs.

25. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein said summarized data comprises statistical information relating to said usage of application programs.

26. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein said application table, for each user executing an application program on said first computer, includes a respective record containing summarized data indicative of such application program usage.

27. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein a plurality of application programs are executed on said first computer by a user, said application table comprising a corresponding plurality of records, one for each application program and user combination, each record having summarized data comprising statistical information regarding such use of said application programs.

28. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein a plurality of application programs are executed on said first computer by a user, said application table comprising a corresponding plurality of records, one for each application program and system combination, each record having summarized data comprising statistical information
5 regarding such use of said application programs.

29. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein said statistical information includes one selected from the group comprising a counting indicating the number of times an executable has run, a start time when running of the executable began, a start time when running of the executable was terminated, a run duration of the executable, a
5 CPU time indicative of an amount of time used to run said executable, and a measure of an amount of memory used by said executable.

30. The apparatus of claim 24 further including a plurality of computers arranged in a tree style hierarchy, wherein application tables included in databases associated with each computer in said hierarchy are condensed and transmitted, level-by-level, to databases upstream in said hierarchy.